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**TO: MICHIGAN HORSE OWNERS**

**Current EHV-1 Situation:**

On March 19, MDARD was notified of a Livingston County horse testing positive for Equine Herpes Virus type 1 (EHV-1). Unfortunately, this horse had to be humanely euthanized. As of April 2, 2015, three additional Michigan horses have tested positive for EHV-1. The horses developed fevers and are under veterinary care. One of these additional positive horses is from the same Livingston County stable in which the index horse resided.

Two of the additional positive horses are at a separate stable in Saginaw County in which horses attended a March 7, 2015 event in Barry County also attended by the initial positive EHV horse.

There are currently four facilities in Ionia, Saginaw and Livingston County under quarantine, including the two facilities where the EHV positive horses reside, that are monitoring horses for signs and symptoms of illness, including a fever greater than 101.5 Fahrenheit.

MDARD continues to trace all contacts of infected horses to ensure no further disease transmission has occurred. Horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their horses and to contact their veterinarian if a horse has a fever greater than 101.5.

The following is a list of frequently asked questions from horse owners regarding the current EHV-1 outbreak

**1. What is EHV-1 and how is it spread?**

EHV-1 is a contagious virus in horses spread either by direct contact with EHV-1 affected horses or indirect contact through people, equipment or vehicles that have been exposed to EHV-1 affected horses. EHV-1 is not a human health concern, but is of concern to horse owners, as it is easily spread from horse to horse.

## **2. What strain of EHV have Michigan horses had?**

There are two strains of EHV-1, the original, wild-type strain (non-neuropathogenic type) and a newly emerging strain which is a mutated version of the original strain (neuropathogenic type). Two of the positive horses, one from each farm, have had additional diagnostic tests performed to discover the EHV-1 genotype. In both cases, the EHV-1 was the non-neuropathogenic genotype, and therefore is the original, wild-type strain. Most horses infected with the EHV-1 original strain will have respiratory signs and up to about 25% can still be expected to have neurological signs.

## **3. What is a quarantine?**

A quarantine is a government issued document applying to individual animals, group of animals or specific species on a farm. A quarantine restricts animal movement on and off the farm, and does not regulate people movement on and off the farm. It can also specify how animals are to be cared for.

## **4. Who enforces a quarantine?**

MDARD administers and enforces all animal quarantines. Quarantines are put in place to mitigate risk to Michigan horse owners. Violators of quarantines can be fined and/or jailed per the regulations and authority for quarantines found in Public Act 466, the Animal Industry Act.

## **5. If this is the respiratory form of EHV, why are horses being quarantined?**

EHV-1 is a reportable disease in Michigan, and by law, any person that knows of or suspects the disease is required to contact MDARD. MDARD is going through the same steps as they have in the past when a case of EHV has been reported by reducing the risk of transmission through quarantine.

## **6. How long can EHV-1 survive in the environment and what is the best way to disinfect equipment?**

EHV-1 can survive up to 7 days in normal environmental conditions, and at most, one month, if environmental conditions are perfect. Normal disinfecting procedures (i.e. bleach at a 1:30 dilution) will prove effective to eliminate EHV-1. Make sure when you are cleaning equipment and housing area that you remove organic material (dirt, manure, dust) before applying a disinfectant. Make sure you are practicing proper biosecurity and washing hands, changing clothes and boots, and not sharing equipment between horses and farms. Equipment includes items such as halters, bridles, saddles, buckets, grooming tools and even trailers.

**7. Should I comingle horses that have left my farm with horses that have remained?**

Horses entering the premises (new horses and horses returning from events) should be quarantined from resident horses for 21 days. This is called an isolation period.

**8. Can horses test negative and still show symptoms?**

Yes because the EHV-1 virus is shed intermittently and if a sample is taken when no virus is being released the test will be negative.

**9. How long should I monitor my exposed horses for EHV-1?**

Horses should be monitored for 28 days after the exposure to EHV-1 affected horses. Horse owners should monitor their horses by checking temperatures, twice daily. Anything greater than 101.5 is of concern. Any time a horse on your farm has a temperature greater than 101.5 you should restart your 28 day monitoring.

**10. Are there state import/export regulations that require testing for EHV-1?**

There are no testing requirements for import/export regarding the EHV-1 virus. You should work with your local veterinarian to obtain an interstate health certificate and your vet will determine if your horse should travel.

**11. If the show was on March 7, why are we seeing new cases on new farms now?**

At this time, we consider all horses that attended a March 7 event in Barry County to be at the highest risk of exposure. We know from the progression of this outbreak that a secondary transmission is occurring. In other words, horses which attended the March 7 event may have been infected, shown only minimal signs of disease (fever, possibly a runny nose) and spread the disease to another horse.

**12. If my horses were exposed what is the point of vaccinating now?**

Horses should be vaccinated with the EHV-1 & EHV-4 vaccine to prevent illness. Discuss with your local veterinarian your vaccine schedule and how often you need to be administering the EHV-1 & EHV-4 booster.

**Where do I get more information?**

For more information on EHV-1, please visit our website at [www.michigan.gov/equinediseases](http://www.michigan.gov/equinediseases)